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Resettlement Efforts Urged for 40,000 Cubans

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Renewed resettlement efforts for 40,000 refugees were urged Wednesday by John Thomas, national director of the Cuban Refugee Program, in Miami to confer with resettlement agency officials.

Thomas said he was appealing to the Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and non-sectarian agencies "to do everything in their power" to find opportunities in other cities for the

refugees in Miami still receiving federal assistance.

It's estimated there are about 80,000 refugees now in Miami registered with the center. About 40,000 are dependent on federal assistance. The others are self-supporting.

Nearly 77,000 refugees have already been resettled in more than 1,800 communities across the country.

Thomas' statements came in direct rebuttal to new rumors of a resettlement moratorium and phasing out of the local center.

Refugee Center officials here said Thomas' visit from Washington was a "periodic one" to discuss resettlement affairs with the private agencies in the program.

"There are no plans for phasing out the center nor has resettlement been stopped," Refugee Center

Information Officer Paul Lane said.

"None have been discussed. You can't discuss things like that when you have 40,000 people who still need help. Resettlement has been the one objective of the program and it will continue to be."

"The response of the American people to the call for sponsors and jobs has been magnificent," Thomas said.

"The remaining task is small if large numbers of churches and civic groups in all states participate. The refugees now making their

escape through the Straits of Florida need opportunities as urgently as the Cubans who have already been resettled."